

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CLERGY

Dear Sirs:

Attached are copies of two statements, one by St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 39th and Locust Streets, Philadelphia, Pa. and one by the American Orthodox Church of the United States in New York City. Each statement is a proclamation that the church is for all mankind, including homosexuals. Churches and the clergy all over the country are supporting and opening their doors to the homophile movements.

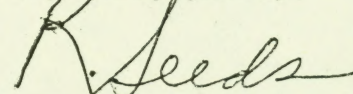
This open letter is to inform all the clergy in our area that a homophile organization does exist in Northeastern Pennsylvania. It is the Lehigh Valley Homophile Organization with headquarters in Bethlehem, Pa. Meetings are held on the fourth Sunday afternoon of each month in the Unitarian Church of Bethlehem. Our goal is to gain respect and dignity for the homosexual in his community.

We are listed by the United Churches of the Lehigh Valley as a referral agency for their Life Line Telephone Service. We have brought in guest speakers, such as Barbara Gittings who was commissioned to write several chapters in the book The Same Sex, and publicly invited all local clergy of the valley as well as the general public to attend these lecture/discussion groups. These have been very successful and more are planned. We are actively engaged in supporting legislation to guarantee civil liberties for all homosexuals as well as our religious acceptance.

What can you do as a clergyman? St. Mary's Episcopal Church of Philadelphia has sponsored three dances for the Homophile Action League of Philadelphia. These dances were held in the church auditorium. This was accompanied by a Soda Bar and assisted by both the clergy and laymen of the church. There were no age barriers. The local officials sanction such activities because it keeps the young off the streets and out of trouble. The Matachine Society of Pittsburgh holds their meetings at the Methodist Church and are planning many social activities with city officials approval. We are looking for this understanding and affiliation in our area. There are many young homosexuals in our area who roam the Streets and bars who have no decent place to go or anyone to confide in when confronted with social problems. We are anxious to establish a Soda Bar and/or dance for the young people under proper supervision. Any suggestions or help which you can recommend would be greatly appreciated.

If you would like to be on our mailing list or to meet with our representative in your area, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Very truly yours,



R. Seeds, Executive Director
LE-HI-HO
P.O. Box 1003
Moravian Station
Bethlehem, Pa. 18018

A STATEMENT CONCERNING ST. MARY'S CHURCH AND THE HOMOPHILE ACTION LEAGUE

THEOLOGY

As Jesus indicated, the Kingdom of God is open to all men; in the words of the Book of Common Prayer, "all sorts and conditions of men" are our fellowship.

As the Church is a sanctuary for all men, so all men are welcome to claim it as such.

MORALITY

A judgement as to the morality of any act will be determined by the whole nature of the relationship of persons involved, and the circumstances of each act.

HUMANITY

Human beings, male and female, are distributed in a spectrum of heterosexuality and homosexuality. As far as the Church is concerned, the categories described by the words "heterosexual" and "homosexual" imply nothing with regard to sinfulness, criminality or illness. The Church meets all men first as fellow human beings. Furthermore, to so single out the sexuality (as compared to any other personal aspect) of any individual is to jeopardize the development of his full human potential in all areas of life.

SOCIETY

Society at large can not regard homosexuals as criminal and laws to that effect must be rescinded.

The matter of sexuality and sexual acts is primarily a personal and private matter and the actions of responsible, consenting adults are not the proper domain of the law.

AVAILABILITY

Any group of persons or organization sponsoring events in church buildings, or on church property has a claim on the availability of the clergy and lay members of the church for counselling and referral in regard to personal problems, employment, or social concerns.

RESPONSIBILITY

Any group of persons or organization making use of the church buildings, property or personnel should be available for consultation, discussion and communication with other inquiring groups or individuals, and will assist with the upkeep and maintenance costs of Church facilities to the extent feasible.

A NEW CHURCH FOR GAY PEOPLE

(Tel: 242-6616)

Gay people of New York, here at last is a traditional church which you can enter proudly and as yourself, without fear of censure or denunciation.

The American Orthodox Church of the United States (Western Orthodox) was founded three years ago. It is a new concept, turning back to the earliest Christian ethic (the Apostolic era and the early Fathers) for its guidance. It is an outgoing church, a church of brotherly love where we, as adults, worship an adult God; a God who is not a nineteenth century prude or a sixteenth century tyrant; Who is not obsessed with man-made prohibitions or with local concepts of morality. Our services are founded in the sacraments of our Lord, and we believe firmly that Love casts out fear.

The American Church has founded a brand new parish in Manhattan, with its church and office at 300 9th Avenue at 28th Street. Our pastor, Father Robert Clement, is an ordained priest who has served for 22 years in his orders, for other churches. He has founded this parish because he believes that homosexuals have nothing to fear from their God, and that it is time for a sacramental church which will welcome them.

Our new parish provides such a welcome, in a fine old church with a splendid organ - a serene and happy place where all our brothers and sisters can feel at ease. Our parish is geared specifically to meet the needs of gay people. This is a church where they can worship together, find sympathy and assistance with their problems, and where they can help to build a loving, gay community.

A God of Love cannot be bounded. If you accept your own nature honestly within yourself, then here is a Church where you can face your God openly, with the same honesty and self-respect.

Our service is held every Sunday, at 2.00 p.m. Plan to stay on afterwards for cake and coffee, and to meet Father Robert and your friends.

Do join us. Our service is a joyful experience.